

## **HOPE MAY SPRING ETERNAL EVEN WHEN WE KNOW BETTER**

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You have heard the expression you can't go back. Most of us have discovered this to be a truism through experience. Yet hope always springs eternal whenever we let ourselves be seduced with our reminiscences. Seldom are our expectations met. The older one gets the more often they are presented.

One of the biggest disappointments I ever had was returning after several years to one of the best brook trout streams I had ever fished. It was on the outlet to Moss Lake where it ran into the North Branch of the Moose River.

I used to take a boat up Rondaxe, park it and fish on foot up through the alders and shaded banks. The water and fish were beautiful and ideal. This was back in the '60's

Some 15 or so years later I began to fantasize about how pleasant the fishing and fish were and determined to try it once more. Parking on the old Raquette Lake railroad bed I bushwhacked through the woods to the stream. It proved once again that you couldn't go back.

All vestiges of the sheltering alders and trees were gone. In their place was a scene of the worst possible environmental degradation anyone would ever believe possible. It was not caused, as so often is in the case, by irresponsible human behavior but by "nature's engineers". The oft touted darlings of the elitist crowd - beavers.

The once gurgling, sparkling cold water was replaced by muddied, warm and stagnated pools. The only sign of fish life were chubs and suckers, which were being fought over by legions of blue herons. I left in disgust knowing from experience that it would take centuries for nature to ever hope to restore what had once been there.

In my opinion, what some consider to be quaint natural engineers are the curse of the Adirondacks. Their only obvious benefit was to provide a partial subsistence income to early natives. This was short-lived with the "tweety bird crowd" clamoring for the end of trapping and use of natural furs. The sight of that once beautiful stream and its source of pure clear cold water disturbed me much more than seeing a good-looking woman in a sheared beaver coat.

The list is endless of streams ruined throughout the Adirondacks. In the vicinity of Old Forge the outlets of Nick's Lake, Little Moose Outlet and Indian Brook are just a few of many.

It occurs to me that many of the scenes I once enjoyed the most have been altered and rendered to deplorable conditions through dramatic changes in the environment. Many of the changes have been brought about by nearly uncontrollable conditions such as population explosions, expansions under the guise of progress and poor planning, whatever the action.

Much of what has happened would have been avoidable if the truth had been known or respected about the changes nature being what it is and slick public relations skill, we never learn the consequences until too late.

All of the above emotions and thoughts on the subject were brought into focus recently. I was working on a log sale with an old and respected business associate who had recently bought a sawmill near my old hometown. A pond went with the mill that provided me with many days of fishing pleasure when I was growing up. I rode my bike there long before I learned to drive a car. Those memories came flooding back as we visited. I asked for and received permission to fish the pond once more.

As I reflected on the prospects of turning back the hands of time and recapturing once again the pleasures I had enjoyed there, I now hope that it is, after all, possible to go back again.